

COMPLIMENTARY DINNER
TO
WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH, ESQ.,
BY
THOMAS BAKER,
MAYOR OF MANCHESTER.

SEP. 15TH 1881.

TO
MR. ALDERMAN CURTIS,
FROM
THE MAYOR.

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Sept: 6. 1881.

My dear Mr. Evans,

My friend Edmund
Gates, Editor of the "World," has
expressed a strong desire
to be present at the Dinner on
the 15th.

I have forwarded his
note to the Mayor, with a
heartily recommendation from
myself, and I hope he may
get an invitation. He is a
very genial, nice fellow, and
I am sure the Mayor would
like him.

The Mayor has offered me a
room at the Town Hall, but I
have declined it, and shall
go to the "Queen's Hotel."

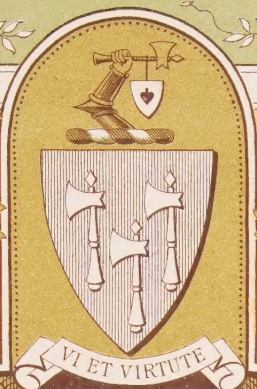
What about my good friend
Mr. Hyde? I hope the matter
has been satisfactorily settled.
If not, I wish you would speak
to Mr. Crossley about it. Is
Dr. Cairnsworth invited?

With kind regards

Very truly yours,

W. Harrison Cairnsworth

Born
4th
FEBRUARY,
1805.



In
KING
STREET,
MANCHESTER.



W. Harrison Ainsworth

COMPLIMENTARY DINNER
TO
WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH, ESQ.,
BY
THOMAS BAKER,
MAYOR OF MANCHESTER.

As an expression of the high esteem in which he is held
by his Fellow-townsmen and of his services to
LITERATURE.

Brief Biographical Notice of WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH.

Our distinguished and highly esteemed guest of this evening was born in this city, in King Street, on February 4th, 1805. His early days were passed at Beech Hill, Cheetham, to which place his father removed shortly after the birth of his son.

The Manchester Grammar School had the honour of adding the name of Harrison Ainsworth to the School Register. That name has now become one of the most honoured amongst other honoured names. On March 20th, 1817, he became a pupil in Dr. Elsdale's class. A graphic description of the School at that period was afterwards written by Mr. Ainsworth in "Mervyn Clitheroe," portions of which are extracted and placed on the 7th page of this pamphlet. His scholastic career was marked with success; he obtained the high opinion of Dr. Smith, the head master. The time having arrived for a business career, his father, Mr. Thomas Ainsworth, a solicitor, in very extensive practice, placed him with Mr. Alexander Kay, solicitor, with a view to the youth following his own business. The profession of the law did not prove a congenial one; literature soon became his favourite pursuit; numerous were the writings he issued. This was before he was nineteen. The death of his father required him to qualify himself to take the head of the business, and for this purpose he went to London. Literature still had the greater attraction. While completing his legal education he became acquainted with Mr. Ebers, whose daughter he subsequently married. The turning point in his career was here. At Mr. Ebers' suggestion he decided to abandon a lucrative certainty for an experiment tending more to his own desires.

He decided to become a publisher; Mr. Laman Blanchard said of this:—"His was not the speculation of an ordinary publisher; his aim was to promote the interests of literature, to advance his own reputation as a writer, and to surround himself with such authors as it was alike honourable to serve and to be associated with; he thought he might bring forward sterling works, rejected, perhaps, as not 'fashionable,' and assist writers of a better class than those who aspire to a mere fleeting popularity, in any case, he should succeed in shewing that such an enterprise might be conducted upon liberal and gentlemanlike principles." These estimable intentions and wishes were not realised—the publishing business was given up.

Before settling down to further work he travelled through Switzerland and Italy. The year following, 1830, he conceived the idea of writing a three volued novel—it was "Rookwood." After various delays it was published in 1834. This work established his reputation as a writer, and called forth very favourable criticisms from the press, the *Edinburgh Review* bestowing great praise upon it. Two years afterwards "Rookwood" was illustrated by the inimitable George Cruikshank. In 1837 "Crichton" appeared, meeting with a rapid sale, and further establishing the reputation of its author. The celebrated story of "Jack Sheppard" appeared in serial form in *Bentley's Miscellany*, of which magazine Mr. Ainsworth became Editor upon the retirement of Charles Dickens. "Guy Fawkes" likewise appeared in the same magazine.

In 1840 the "Tower of London" appeared in monthly numbers, with illustrations by George Cruikshank, and had a brilliant success. In 1841 "Old St. Paul's" appeared in the *Sunday Times*, the liberal proprietors of that newspaper paying £1,000 for an edition of the romance. In the same year Mr. Ainsworth retired from the editorship of *Bentley*, and in 1842 started a magazine bearing his own name. The celebrated "Miser's Daughter" commenced in the opening number of the new magazine, which was illustrated by George Cruikshank. In July of the same year "Windsor Castle" was issued, and later on, "Saint James's; or, the Court of Queen Anne." In 1845 Mr. Ainsworth became sole proprietor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, by purchase from Mr. Colburn. "Old St. Paul's" having proved a great success, the proprietors of the *Sunday Times* bought an edition of the "Lancashire Witches" on the same terms as the previous romance. In 1854 were published the "Star Chamber," and a charming story entitled "The Flitch of Bacon; or, the Custom of Dunmow." The old custom of Dunmow was revived entirely through Mr. Ainsworth's influence and assistance. Space will not allow us to particularise each subsequent work as it appeared; a chronological list is given at the back of this pamphlet.

In November, 1854, Mr. Ainsworth became the proprietor of *Bentley's Miscellany*, in consequence of which he discontinued *Ainsworth's Magazine*, and combined it with the *Miscellany*. Mr. Ainsworth has, with great rapidity and regularity, written romances up to the present date, all of which have enjoyed great success, and several of them have been translated into German, French, Dutch, Russian, and Spanish. The sale of his works in America is very large. Expressions of regret have often been made that Mr. Ainsworth did not devote more attention to poetry and ballads, his talent for which is amply proved by the specimens given in his earlier works. A collection of his poems was published in 1855, entitled *Ballads; Romantic, Fantastic, and Humorous*.

Mr. Ainsworth has through life endeared himself to a host of eminent men, and is enabled to look back upon a successful career, honourably achieved. Those who know him best are quick to award him their highest praise and value his friendship. On this occasion it affords the Mayor and his guests peculiar satisfaction to welcome their distinguished fellow-townsmen and do him honour. They heartily hope he may long be spared to enjoy the friendship of his admirers.

Two masterly Portraits of Mr. Ainsworth have been painted by Maclise, one of which has been engraved by Finden. Pickersgill's full-length portrait was presented by Mr. Ainsworth to the Chetham Hospital, Manchester, in 1878, and is placed in the Library.

Rookwood

Extract from the Dedication.

"When I inscribed this Romance to you, my dear Mother, on its first appearance, I was satisfied that, whatever reception it might meet with elsewhere, at your hands it would be sure of indulgence. Since then, the approbation your partiality would scarcely have withheld, has been liberally accorded by the public;"



CRICHTON.

"Many rare qualities united in the composition of this work. Its pictures of the times and persons it treats of are 'finished sketches,' the effect of which, by a truly artist-like skill, is heightened instead of diminished by the small fine touches that denote a thorough familiarity with every incidental particular of the subject. Thus, not only are the King's Jester and the King's Cook as vividly set before us as Henri himself; but Henri's lineaments are not more accurately painted than is the quaint figure on a piece of embroidery, the fashion of a jewel, or the cut of a garment."

LAMAN BLANCHARD.



Jack Sheppard

"The first of these was the wonderfully popular and much calumniated 'Jack Sheppard,' which, admirably illustrated by George Cruikshank, was universally read; and, by its extraordinary success, called forth attacks on all sides, and a spirit which, to lovers of fair play, looked very much like persecution. On this subject, we cannot do better than refer to Laman Blanchard's very sensible remarks in his *Memoir*."

Manchester School Register.

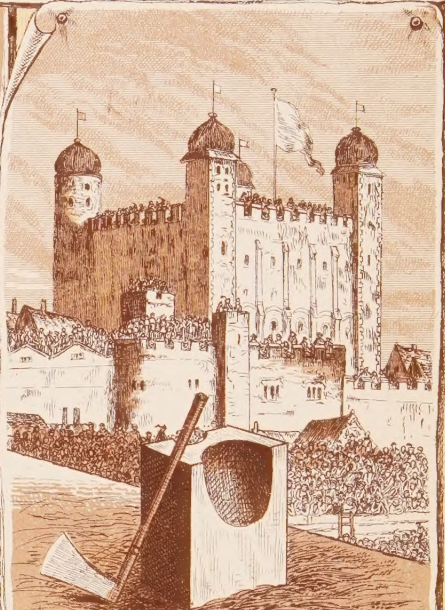




Jane the Quene's



Mazye the quene



THE TOWER OF LONDON.

Extract from Preface.

"It has been, for years, the cherished wish of the writer of the following pages, to make the Tower of London—the proudest monument of antiquity, considered with reference to its historical associations, which this country or any other possesses,—the ground-work of a Romance; and it was no slight satisfaction to him, that circumstances, at length, enabled him to carry into effect his favourite project, in conjunction with the inimitable Artist, George Cruikshank, whose designs accompany the work. Desirous of exhibiting the Tower in its triple light of a palace, a prison, and a fortress, the Author has shaped his story with reference to that end."



Guy Fawkes.

Extract from Preface.

"In Viviana Radcliffe I have sought to portray the loyal and devout Catholic, such as I conceive the character to have existed at the period. In Catesby, the unscrupulous and ambitious plotter, masking his designs under the cloak of religion. In Garnet, the subtle, and yet sincere Jesuit. And in Fawkes, the gloomy and superstitious enthusiast. One doctrine I have endeavoured to enforce throughout,—

TOLERATION."

Old Saint Pauls.

A TALE OF THE PLAGUE
AND THE FIRE.

"But they may not so readily surmise with what a gentle and reconciling humanity he has detained us amidst what was loathsome, to exhibit to us, as it were, the lily in the charnel-house; and carried us through the pestilence and the flame, to vindicate the severity of human trials, to inculcate salutary lessons of exertion and endurance, and track the course of faith, and courage, and happiness through all."

LAMAN BLANCHARD.



THE MISER'S Daughter

"Mr. Blanchard's favourable prognostications in regard to the 'Miser's Daughter,' were fully justified by the result. Of all the writer's productions it has, perhaps, held the chief place in public estimation."

Memoir of W. H. Ainsworth.



Windsor Castle.

"There is an old tale goes, that Herne the Hunter,
Sometime a keeper here in Windsor Forest,
Doth all the winter time, at still midnight,
Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns,
And there he blasts the tree."

Shakespeare.



THE LANCASHIRE WITCHES.

"TO JAMES CROSSLEY, Esq.,
(OF MANCHESTER),
PRESIDENT OF THE CHETHAM SOCIETY,
AND THE LEARNED EDITOR OF

The Discoverie of Witches in the County of Lancaster.

(The ground-work of the following pages.)

This Romance, undertaken at his suggestion, is inscribed by his old and sincerely attached friend—THE AUTHOR."



Mervyn

Clitheroe



"Inscribed to my Contemporaries at the Manchester School."

The following Extract is of great interest to friends of the Grammar School.

"I cannot say much in praise of the architectural beauty of the School; for, if truth must be spoken, it was exceedingly ugly; and, though a very old foundation, the building was comparatively modern, and did not date back, from the period of which I write, more than twenty or thirty years. It was raised on a high sandstone bank overlooking the little river Irk, not far from its confluence with the Irwell; and viewed on this side, in connection with the old and embrowned walls adjoining it, its appearance was not unpicturesque,—certainly more pleasing than when seen from the crowded and noisy thoroughfare by which it was approached. It was a large, dingy, and smoke begrimed building, with copings of stone, and had so many windows that it looked like a lantern. In front, between the angles of the pointed roof, was placed a stone effigy of the bird of wisdom, which seemed to gaze down at us with its great goggle eyes as we passed by, as if muttering, "Enter this academic abode over which I preside, and welcome, but you'll never come out as clever as I." What the School wanted in antiquity was supplied by a venerable pile contiguous to it, which, in remote times, had been part of the Collegiate establishment of the Old Church of Manchester; but, in the reign of James I., falling into the hands of a wealthy and munificent merchant of the place, it was by him devoted to the foundation of a hospital for the maintenance and education of a certain number of poor lads, and to the creation, for public use and benefit, of a large and admirable library within its walls. This was the Blue Coat Hospital and Library, for which Manchester has reason to be grateful.

* * * * * The School was divided into two rooms, each occupying a whole floor, and the Lower School, in those days a very confined, dirty looking place, utterly unworthy of such an establishment, was reached by a flight of steps descending from the little court I have described. But happily I knew nothing, from personal experience, of this dark and dismal hole, being introduced at once to the Upper School, which, if it had no other merit, was airy and spacious enough. There were four fireplaces and four tables, those at either extremity being assigned to the head master and the second master, and the others to the two ushers. Each master had two classes, so that there were eight in all. The walls were whitewashed, and, like the flat roof, without any decoration whatever, unless the oak wainscoting at the back of the boys' benches, which surround the whole schoolroom, can be so considered. These benches, the desks in front of them, and the panels behind, were of the hardest oak; and it was well they were so, for they had to resist the ravages of a thousand knives. In some places they were further secured with clamps of iron. Everybody cut his name on the desks or wainscot, like the captives in state prisons in the olden time, and amongst these mementoes I suppose I have somewhere left mine. * *

On entering the School, the buzz of so many tongues was prodigious, and almost took away the power of thought or study; but after a while you got used to it, and the noise did not affect you in the least. When the din rose to too high a pitch, loud cries of "Silence, you boys!" would be heard, accompanied by the rapping of a cane on the table, or the dreadful sounds of a punishment would produce a partial lull; and then might be remarked the deep sonorous voice of the archi-didasculus, Dr. Smith, mouthing out a passage from Æschylus or Aristophanes, rumbling away like distant thunder, or the sharp high pitched voice of the hypo-didasculus, Dr. Elsdale. We began the day's work betimes, and prayers were read both at morn and eventide. On winter evenings, when the School was lighted up by tapers, the twinkling light of which fell upon the boys as they knelt at prayer, while no sound was heard but that proceeding from the reader of the devotional exercises, I used to think the scene striking enough. But it was gone in a moment. No sooner were prayers over, than everybody seized his cap and books; boxes were hastily clapped-to; tapers extinguished; the hurried tramping of departing footsteps succeeded—and all vanished like a dream."

A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF William Harrison Ainsworth's Works.

	DATE
Rookwood	1834
Crichton	1837
Jack Sheppard	1839
Tower of London	1840
Guy Fawkes	1841
Old St. Paul's : a Tale of the Plague and Fire of London	1841
The Miser's Daughter	1842
Windsor Castle	1843
St. James's ; or, the Court of Queen Anne	1844
Lancashire Witches	1848
Star-Chamber	1854
Flitch of Bacon	1854
Ballads : Romantic, Fantastical, and Humorous, including the Combat of the Thirty	1855
Spendthrift	1856
Mervyn Clitheroe	1857
Ovingdean Grange : a Tale of the South Downs	1860
Constable of the Tower	1861
Lord Mayor of London	1862
Cardinal Pole	1863
John Law, the Projector	1864
The Spanish Match ; or, Charles Stuart in Madrid	1865
Myddleton Pomfret	1865
The Constable de Bourbon	1866
Old Court	1867
The South Sea Bubble	1868
Hilary St. Ives	1869
Talbot Harland	1870
Tower Hill	1871
Boscobel ; or, the Royal Oak	1872
The Manchester Rebels ; or, the Fatal '45	1873
Merry England ; or, Nobles and Serfs	1874
The Goldsmith's Wife	1875
Chetwynd Calverley	1876
The Leaguer of Lathom : a Tale of the Civil War in Lancashire	1877
The Fall of Somerset	1877
Beatrice Tyldesley	1878
Beau Nash ; or, Bath in the Eighteenth Century	1880
Auriol, and other Tales	1880
Stanley Brereton	1881

